



# NEWS RELEASE

## OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR HOWARD COUNTY

**For Immediate Release:**

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### **Columbia Woman Convicted of Assault on Mall Carousel Operator**

The 23-year-old woman arrested in the strong-arm robbery and assault that occurred at the carousel located at The Mall in Columbia last summer has been convicted on assault charges. Ahleyah Marie Rockwell, of the 8900 block of Skyrock Court, was convicted late, this afternoon, on two counts of second-degree assault of the carousel owner and a bystander at the conclusion of a two-day trial in Howard County Circuit Court. The jury found Rockwell not guilty on two counts of robbery, one count of theft and one count of second-degree assault.

According to police and prosecutors, shortly before 4 p.m. on August 5, a carousel employee witnessed Rockwell reach into the ticket booth and grab cash from the cash register. The carousel owner then confronted Rockwell who grabbed her by the hair, threw her onto the ground and bit her hand. Both the owner and the employee testified on Wednesday. A carousel customer testified that she video-recorded the assault which was widely distributed by police and played for jurors during the trial.

Ahleyah Rockwell testified in her own defense, telling the jury that the carousel owner assaulted her and that she struggled with the woman in self-defense. Rockwell denied biting the woman. Assistant State's Attorney Natasha Blount called into question Rockwell's honesty when she queried her about a 2016 conviction for making a false statement to police.

During closing arguments Blount stated, "The defendant told you she was jumped by a 69-year-old woman for no reason; she did not tell you the truth." She added, "What took place at the carousel on August 5 was outrageous; it was criminal."

Judge William V. Tucker ordered a pre-sentence investigation and scheduled a March 23 sentencing hearing. Rockwell remains free on bond.

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